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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIJING 002753

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PHUM PGOV KIRF CH
SUBJECT: UIGHUR BUSINESSWOMAN DESCRIBES XINJIANG REGION
TENSIONS

REF: A. BEIJING 2183 AND PREVIOUS
 1B. 07 BEIJING 7550
 1C. 07 BEIJING 7591
 1D. 07 BEIJING 4871

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor
Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) Summary: A Uighur businesswoman and author, who is also a staff member of the Xinjiang Region Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, described mass detentions of Uighurs in the wake of the early-July ethnic violence in Urumqi. She described how she was almost detained August 12 after attempting to stop a police assault on a Uighur woman. Our contact recounted unsubstantiated reports that between one and two thousand Uighurs were killed by security forces during and immediately after the unrest. Uighurs and Han alike are furious at Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Lequan, who is blamed for the violence by both groups, she said. Tensions are so high in Urumqi, according to our source, that she has decided to relocate temporarily to Beijing. Senior ethnic-Uighur Communist Party cadres are helpless to change the government's harsh policies toward minorities, she claimed. Meanwhile, authorities continue to confiscate the passports of Uighur men, including her husband, to prevent unauthorized Hajj travel.
End Summary.

12. (S) PolOff spoke September 9 and September 23 with Dildar Eziz (strictly protect), a Uighur businesswoman, author and government employee. Trained in law, Eziz works as an editor in the policy research department of the Xinjiang Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). She also runs a cosmetology school in downtown Urumqi near the center of the July 5 riots.

Peaceful Protest Turns Deadly

13. (S) Eziz's account of the initial demonstration by Uighur students July 5 largely tracks with that of other contacts (ref A). Eziz said she saw Uighur students marching along Jiefang South Road, where her cosmetology school is located, to demonstrate against the June 26 violence against Uighur workers at a toy factory in Shaoguan, Guangdong Province. The student-led marches were peaceful, she said, with many carrying the PRC flag. Soon after the demonstration started, Public Security Bureau (PSB) officers used harsh, though non-lethal, methods against the protestors as the marchers entered Urumqi's South Gate (Nanmen) traffic square. PSB officers, she said, grabbed, and even stomped on, the flags carried by the Uighur students. Eziz said

this rough treatment of the students threw a crowd of Uighur bystanders into a rage, starting the violence.

¶4. (S) Eziz acknowledged the violence by Uighurs during the night of July 5. Eziz, who did not claim to have witnessed security forces using lethal force, said she had heard stories -- and believed -- that People's Armed Police (PAP) troops sent in to quell the riots had opened fire in Uighur neighborhoods with automatic weapons. According to these rumors, PAP forces had killed "one to two thousand Uighurs" in and around Urumqi during the riots. Starting in the early hours of July 6, the rumors went, security forces had surreptitiously cremated the bodies of Uighur dead and buried the remains in a mass grave. Eziz said she did not personally know any of the Uighurs who died in the violence, though the son of a friend had been missing since July 5. (Note: Rumors of Uighur deaths numbering in the hundreds or thousands and accounts of secret cremations and burials have been repeated by several Uighur contacts and are circulating widely in the Uighur community. Post has no independent information confirming these accounts. We include this account as an example of the narratives that are informing Uighur public opinion about the riots.)

United in Anger at Wang Lequan

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¶5. (S) Asked about the demonstrations that started September 3 over reports of syringe attacks, Eziz expressed skepticism that Uighurs were responsible for the attacks. She speculated that the incidents had been manufactured by Chinese authorities to focus Han grievances on Uighurs. Eziz said in the aftermath of July 5, Uighurs and Han alike were furious at Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Lequan, whom Eziz accused of fomenting ethnic hatred over his 15-year rule of Xinjiang. Uighurs hated Wang Lequan because he "coddles the Han while showing an iron fist toward Uighurs." However, Eziz observed, since July 5, Han had also turned against Wang because they saw him as ultimately responsible for the violence.

Uighurs Can Be Detained Anytime, Anywhere

¶6. (S) Eziz said that, since the July 5 riots, authorities had engaged in large-scale, indiscriminate detentions of Uighurs. Some Uighurs with high-level government connections had also been caught in the dragnet. Eziz said the daughter of the former head of the Urumqi City CPPCC, whom Eziz described as a family friend, had been detained for several days and emerged from the ordeal severely traumatized. Eziz said she had nearly been detained herself August 12 when she witnessed a Uighur woman being slapped by a female Han PSB police officer in downtown Urumqi. The PSB had arrived after the woman, who was holding an infant, had argued with a Han shopkeeper who had refused to allow her to use his store's public phone. Eziz said she had loudly berated the PSB officer for slapping the woman. The policewoman then threatened to detain Eziz, and the situation was only defused when Eziz's supervisor at the Xinjiang CPPCC appeared and apologized to the officer on Eziz's behalf. Three days later, in what Eziz described as a clear attempt to intimidate her, a group of seven PSB and PAP officers arrived at her house to "check her papers." Eziz said that after

the incident, she decided to move temporarily to Beijing. She said she planned to remain in Beijing for at least six months while she writes a book about the July 5 riot, which she hopes to publish abroad.

¶7. (S) Eziz said the events of the last few months had convinced her to resign from her job with the Xinjiang CPPCC. "Many Uighurs no longer want to be part of government." Uighur policemen no longer wanted to do their jobs after seeing prison conditions and people dying. Prisons in Xinjiang were filled beyond capacity, Eziz said. Eziz claimed to know of an unnamed prison in the mountains east of Urumqi that was so large it "looks like a city." Even before the July 5 riot, she alleged, the secret facility had held many Uighur political prisoners.

Little Faith in Ethnic-Uighur Cadres

¶8. (S) Eziz described senior ethnic-Uighur cadres as demoralized and powerless to influence government policies toward minorities. Eziz said she was close to former NPC Vice Chairman Ismail Amat. She described Amat as sympathetic to Uighur concerns, but "in the end he always listens to the Party." While in office, Amat had pushed to amend China's laws to give minority regions more autonomy but found little interest among China's top leadership for such changes, she said. Eziz spoke to Amat in Hotan (Hetian) after the July 5 riot and, though visibly upset, he would not criticize the government's handling of the crisis. He urged Eziz to be less outspoken in her criticism of authorities. Amat, according to Eziz, was counseling Uighur elites to "keep their heads down" and wait out this "difficult period." She said Uighurs as a group had a very low opinion of Xinjiang Chairman Nur Bekri and Urumqi Mayor Jerla Isamudin, both of whom she described as unwilling to stand up for Uighur interests. Eziz said current Xinjiang People's Congress Chairman Arken Imirbaki and his predecessor Abdurehim Amet (who retired in 2008) enjoyed a somewhat better image among Uighurs.

Passport Confiscations

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¶9. (S) Eziz, echoing other contacts in Xinjiang (refs B-D), said most Uighur men were not allowed to possess passports due to the Chinese government's efforts to restrict unauthorized Hajj travel. Eziz said her husband had had his passport confiscated after he retired recently from his job as deputy editor of a government-published Uighur-language literary magazine. Eziz called the move "ridiculous" because her husband was "hardly a devout Muslim." Uighurs typically had to pay large deposits to the government before they could travel abroad, though she noted such requirements were not as strict in Urumqi as in other cities in Xinjiang. The deposits were intended to guarantee that the travelers would not attend the Hajj, she said.

Rebiya Kadeer Buildings

¶10. (S) Eziz was aware of efforts by Urumqi officials to close down three buildings owned by Rebiya Kadeer's family. The buildings were to be torn down or turned over for use "by the military," Eziz said. Eziz told PolOff she had known Rebiya

Kadeer in the 1990s and had provided Kadeer with legal advice in a court case in 1997. Government prosecutors involved in the case, Eziz said, later detained her for two days as a result of the assistance she provided to Kadeer.

Additional Bio Notes

¶11. (S) Born in 1959 in Hotan (Hetian), Dildar Eziz graduated in 1980 from Kashgar Normal University with a degree in Uighur literature. From 1995 to 1998, she studied law at a training institute for cadres in Urumqi. She has written nine books, all in Uighur, including four novels and several studies on comparative literature and women's issues. She has also helped produce several documentaries for Xinjiang's provincial television station. Eziz told PolOff that around 2003 she declined an invitation to join the Communist Party. From 2004 to 2005, thanks to book royalties and the success of her cosmetology school, Eziz was able to self-fund a year of study at the Sorbonne in Paris. She recently won a Xinjiang government scholarship to return to France to continue her studies in comparative Uighur/French literature. Eziz said she planned to leave for France in March 2010, though she said she had no desire to seek asylum abroad.

HUNTSMAN